



Testimony of Eric Gjede
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Before the Labor & Public Employees Committee
Hartford, CT
March 3, 2022

**Testifying in support of
HB 5248: AN ACT CONCERNING COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES OF CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS ON OCCUPATIONAL
LICENSING**

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Sampson, Representative Arora and members of the Labor & Public Employees. My name is Eric Gjede and I am the vice president of public policy for CBIA, the Connecticut Business & Industry Association. CBIA is Connecticut's largest business organization, with thousands of member companies, small and large, representing a diverse range of industries from across the state. Ninety-five percent of our member companies are small businesses with less than 100 employees.

CBIA supports HB 5248.

CBIA supports effective reentry initiatives that help people secure employment when returning to their community. Such constructive public policy, however, must be balanced with reasonable protections that address the valid concerns of employers. We believe HB 5248 has that balance.

HB 5248 removes blanket prohibitions within the general statutes preventing individuals from obtaining a professional license if they have a criminal history, regardless of whether that history is in any way related to the license they are seeking. Under the bill, if the past criminal history is relevant to the professional license being obtained, that individual is ineligible for the license.

This is sensible policy that will help remove barriers preventing individuals with criminal backgrounds from obtaining meaningful employment.

Connecticut has more occupational licensing requirements than virtually every other state. HB 5248 opens the door for individuals with prior felony convictions to pursue various licensed occupations, including as a barber, hairdresser, cosmetician, funeral director, dietician, social worker, art therapist, eyelash technician, architect, and in various construction trades. Additional discussions may be required to address whether it is appropriate

to include licenses for accountancy and security officer occupations, but overall, a successfully rehabilitated individual should be free to seek a professional license.

Further, HB 5248 allows individuals with a criminal history to create their own opportunities. After obtaining a professional license, they have the option to start their own business in their chosen profession.

HB 5248 does not require the business community to ignore that some individuals have criminal histories. It provides opportunities without preventing honest conversations between employers and job applicants or incurring unwanted legal or safety risks.

HB 5248 is balanced policy that helps those attempting to reintegrate into society. CBIA is happy to lend its support to this legislation.